

### **Listing of Claims**

1 – 71. (Cancelled)

72. (Currently Amended) A gaming console for playing a base game, the gaming console comprising:

a display configured to display images of the base game;

a game controller configured to control the images to be displayed on the display, to play the base game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize; and

said images including a visual character, said visual character being periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, ~~the character appearing on the display~~, said ~~visual~~ character having an association with a function of the gaming console, and wherein the appearance of the character on the display (1) is triggered by a random event related to the amount of a bet placed, and (2) ceases to appear on the display in response to a rate of activities carried out on said gaming console falling below a threshold.

73. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the function associated with the character is independent of an outcome of the base game.

74. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the function associated with the character has an independent, predetermined probability of being triggered.

75 – 76. (Cancelled)

77. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the function associated with the character commences after a completion of the base game.

78. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 77, wherein the function associated with the character commences before a bet is placed on another game.

79. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the bet is a first bet, and the function associated with the character is a first function, and when a second function is triggered from the bet, the first and second functions commence one at a time before a second bet can be placed.

80. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the base game on the console is a video simulation of a spinning reel game and the function associated with the character is an animated spinning reel bonus game in which one or more of a plurality of simulated reels, each carrying a plurality of symbols, are caused to randomly spin and stop, and if a predetermined combination of symbols is displayed a prize associated with the combination is awarded.

81 – 83. (Cancelled)

84. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 80, wherein the controller is further configured to activate the character to spin each of the reels.

85 – 86. (Cancelled)

87. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 80, wherein, while the reels are spinning, the character is further configured to treat one of the reels as a bonus reel and when the reels stop spinning, the character is further configured to treat the bonus reel as having stopped on a wild symbol which substitutes for all symbols on the bonus reel.

88. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 87, wherein the character is further configured to climb the bonus reel.

89. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the base game provided on the console is a video simulation of a spinning reel game and wherein the character is configured to offer a selection between a plurality of options, each of the options is associated with at least one of a hidden prize and a bonus game.

90. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 89, wherein the character holds and offers a choice between a plurality of objects.

91. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 90, wherein the objects include a money representation and a box representation.

92. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 91, wherein the controller is further configured to prompt for a choice between the money representation and the box representation.

93. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 90, wherein, after one of the objects is chosen, the controller is configured to reveal that a number of free games on the console has been awarded, and to apply a multiplier to all prizes won during those free games.

94. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 90, wherein after one of the object is chosen, the controller is configured to determine a variable prize from a range of possible prizes.

95. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the base game provided on the console is a video simulations of a spinning reel game and wherein the character is configured to randomly award a bonus feature game, wherein the bonus feature game is specific to the base game.

96. (Cancelled)

97. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the base game provided on the console is a video simulations of a spinning reel game and wherein the character is configured to appear intermittently and randomly throughout the base game, and to award a variable random bonus prize.

98 – 102. (Cancelled)

103. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the character is configured to deliver visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

104 – 105. (Cancelled)

106. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the random event comprises at least one of:

- a. a periodic trigger event;
- b. a random trigger event;
- c. an occurrence of an external trigger event;
- d. an occurrence of one or more specific game states; and
- e. an occurrence of one or more specific console states.

107. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the random event comprises at least one of:

- (a) an occurrence of a game state wherein a decision is made to position the character to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes;
- (b) an offering of bonus prizes as incentives after long nonwinning stretches have been determined;
- (c) an offering game specific bonus features after a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded;
- (d) an announcement of a bonus game or a series of games awarded;
- (e) an announcement of winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the console, or another console adjacent the console;
- (f) wins in “near-miss” situations by “nudging” a symbol into a winning position;

- (g) an ordering of a taxi after the base game has been active for a long period or when erratic-game play behavior has been detected;
- (h) a periodical offering of a drink or food;
- (i) a periodical provision of public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered; and
- (j) an offering of an advice when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the character explains the fault.

108. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the character is configured to appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner.

109. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 108, wherein the character is configured to appear simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank.

110. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 108, wherein the character is configured to appear only on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time.

111. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 108, wherein the character is configured to be animated to walk from one console to an adjacent console, disappearing from the one console as the character appears on the adjacent console.

112. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 108, wherein, when a jackpot is won, the character is further configured to announce the winning of the jackpot to adjacent consoles.

113. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 108, wherein the console is a first console among a bank of consoles, when the character appears on one of the consoles to award a bonus, the character is further configured to announce simultaneously a presence of the bonus award to other consoles in the bank of consoles.

114. (Previously Presented) The console of claim 72, wherein the console is a first console among a bank of consoles, the character is further configured to initiate a tournament when the first console is eligible for the tournament, and to provide instructions at each of the bank of consoles.

115 – 241. (Cancelled)